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**GENDER, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
AND POVERTY REDUCTION  
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**Essay (Final Session):  
“Introduction to Gender, Economic Development  
and Poverty Reduction”**

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# INTRODUCTION TO GENDER, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY REDUCTION\*

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper presents define and explain the concepts gender and gender equality, explains the relationship between the gender inequality and poverty, discusses the importance of the gender issues in the economic development and also discuss the importance of linking gender to Millennium Development Goals (MGDs). The paper describes that the both poverty and gender inequality are correlated, as poverty exacerbates the gender inequality while the gender inequality exacerbates the poverty and describes the importance of the gender issues in the economic development and MGDs.*

## KEY WORDS

*Gender, Gender and Development, Gender Inequality and Poverty, Gender Equity*

## I - INTRODUCTION

Women represent almost fifty percent of the world population but simultaneously the most neglected and the poorer segment of the population. Women are poorer than men because mostly they are deprived of equal rights & opportunities, lack the access to the financial & economic resources and are denied social status in

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the society especially in the under developed countries (UDCs). So, the gender related issues remain central to development debate and the poverty reduction strategies.

The concepts of the poverty and the economic development are closely related with the gender issues as it will be discussed in this essay. The basic objective of the essay is to define the concepts of 'Gender' and 'Gender Equality', explaining the linkages between poverty and gender inequality and discussing the importance of the gender issues in the economic development. Thus, the organization of the essay follows as; first of all the concepts of 'gender' and the 'gender equality' are discussed in the section-II then the 'relationship between the gender and poverty' and 'the importance of gender issues in economic development' are described respectively in the section III and IV. The section V of the essay states, "How does gender relate to other development issues and how does it relate to attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)?"

## **II – GENDER: SOME CONCEPTS AND DEFINATIONS**

### **WHAT IS GENDER?**

The term "Gender" refers to the comparative or differential roles, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men in a given society.<sup>1</sup> So, the Gender refers the socially and culturally constructed values and roles that influence the relationships between women and men in a specific society and specific time. Certainly, it is not about the biological or physical differentiations that are, usually, termed as 'Sex'.

### **DEFINING GENDER EQUALITY**

The term 'Gender Equality' defined as "Gender equality requires equal enjoyment by women and men of socially-valued goods, opportunities, resources and rewards. Gender equality does not mean that men and women become the same, but that their opportunities and life chances are equal. The emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment does not presume a particular model of gender equality for all societies and cultures, but reflects a concern that women

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP, <http://www.undp.org/gender/>

and men have equal opportunities to make choices about what gender equality means and work in partnership to achieve it. Because of current disparities, equal treatment of women and men is insufficient as a strategy for gender equality. Equal treatment in the context of inequalities can mean the perpetuation of disparities. Achieving gender equality will require changes in institutional practices and social relations through which disparities are reinforced and sustained. It also requires a strong voice for women in shaping their societies" [OECD-DAC, 1998].

According to UNDP the Gender Equality Refers to norms, values, attitudes and perceptions required to attain equal status between women and men without neutralizing the biological differences between women and men. <sup>2</sup> In short, the gender equality means that women and men enjoy the equal status, entitlement and right both in economic and social spheres of life.

### **III - POVERTY AND GENDER INEQUALITY**

The gender inequality and the poverty are closely related. In my opinion both poverty and gender inequality are correlated, as poverty exacerbates the gender inequality while the gender inequality exacerbates the poverty. In other words poverty worsens the gender inequality and vice versa. As gender inequality causes lack of access to productive resources and employment opportunities for women, so it causes poverty. On the other hand, the poor families have a lack of the economic resources. Accordingly the women and girls remain deprived from the education, better food & clothing and even low self-esteem in these families. As a result, poverty results in the gender inequality.

Therefore, we can conclude here that the poverty and gender inequality both are inter-related.

### **IV - IMPORTANCE OF GENDER ISSUES IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The 'economic development' is much broader term than the 'economic growth'. As economic growth refers to the increase in real income of per capita income of

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<sup>2</sup> UNDP, <http://www.undp.org/gender/>

a country, while the economic development not only includes the increase in income but also take into account the improved standard of living and provision of the basic necessities of life like improved health facilities, access to quality education and employment opportunities of life to all the residents of a country without considering the sex, religion and race. Most of the modern measures of economic development like HDI consider the literacy rate and life-expectancy (for both sexes) as an indicator of development. It means the concept of development is related to the gender issues.

So, development policies should focus on the gender equality as the gender equality helps in economic development. Thus we can say that gender issues are very important in economic development policies. Without promoting the gender equality it is hard to achieve the goal of the economic development.

## **V - GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES: LINKING GENDER TO MDGS**

As in the previous section we have discussed the importance of the gender issues in the economic development. And the MDGs set some targets for the different development indicator to be achieved in the given time frame like to cut the extreme poverty in half, to greatly reduce the child mortality is greatly and to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education in the world by 2015.

Thus the MGDs not only considers the gender equality as a one of its goals but it is also important for its other targets, as the World bank (2003) states that, “Gender equality is not only a goal in its own right, but an essential ingredient for achieving all the other Millennium Development Goals. Attempting to meet the MDGs without promoting gender equality will both increase the costs and minimize the likelihood of attaining the goals.”

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